



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

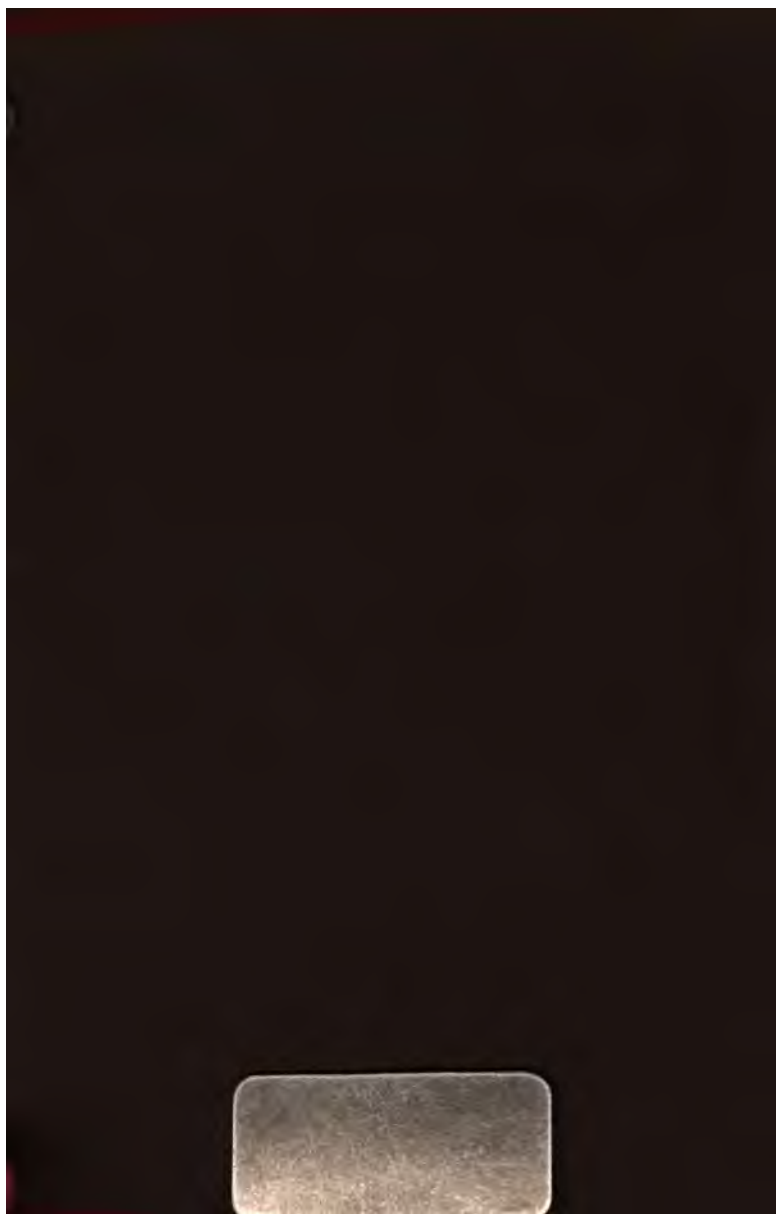
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

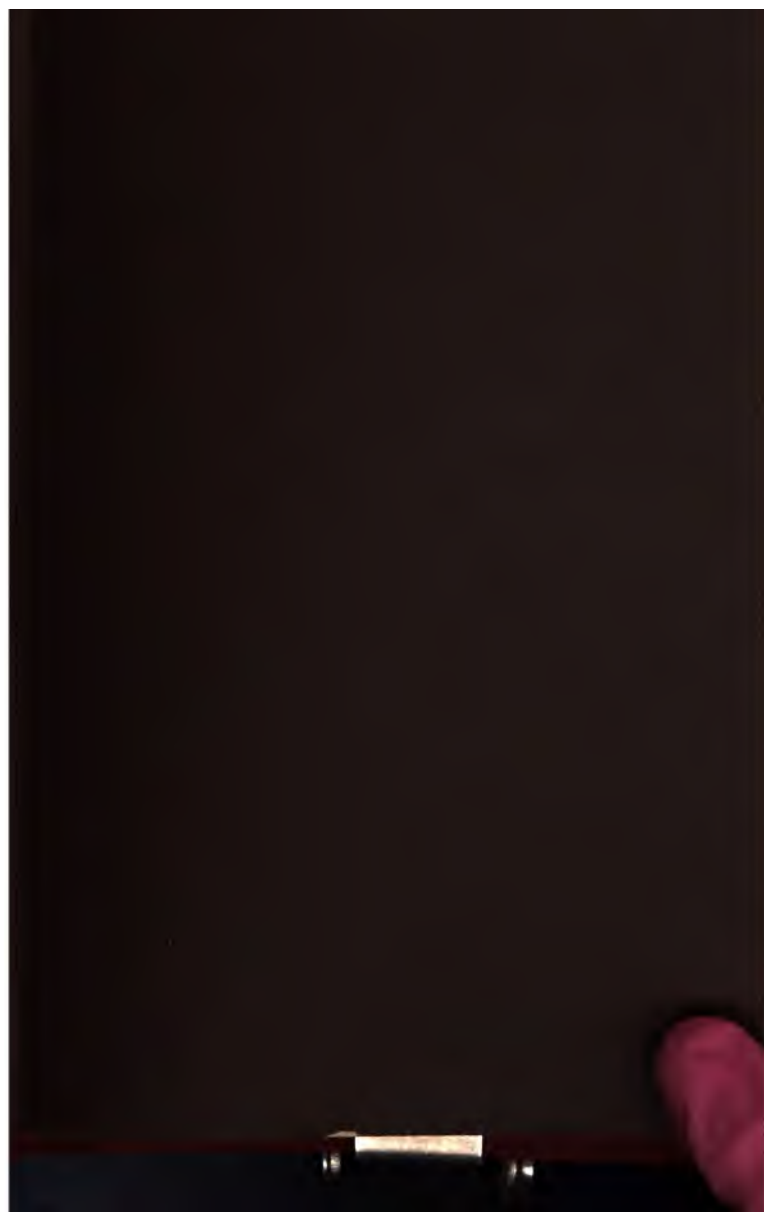
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>







“THINGS THAT MUST BE.”

FOUR ADVENT SERMONS,

PREACHED IN MARGARET'S CHAPEL, BATH,
1872.

I. THE BEAST.
II. THE ANTI-CHRIST.

III. THE FALSE PROPHETS.
IV. THE SECOND ADVENT.

BY

F. TILNEY BASSETT, M.A.,

VICAR OF DULVERTON.

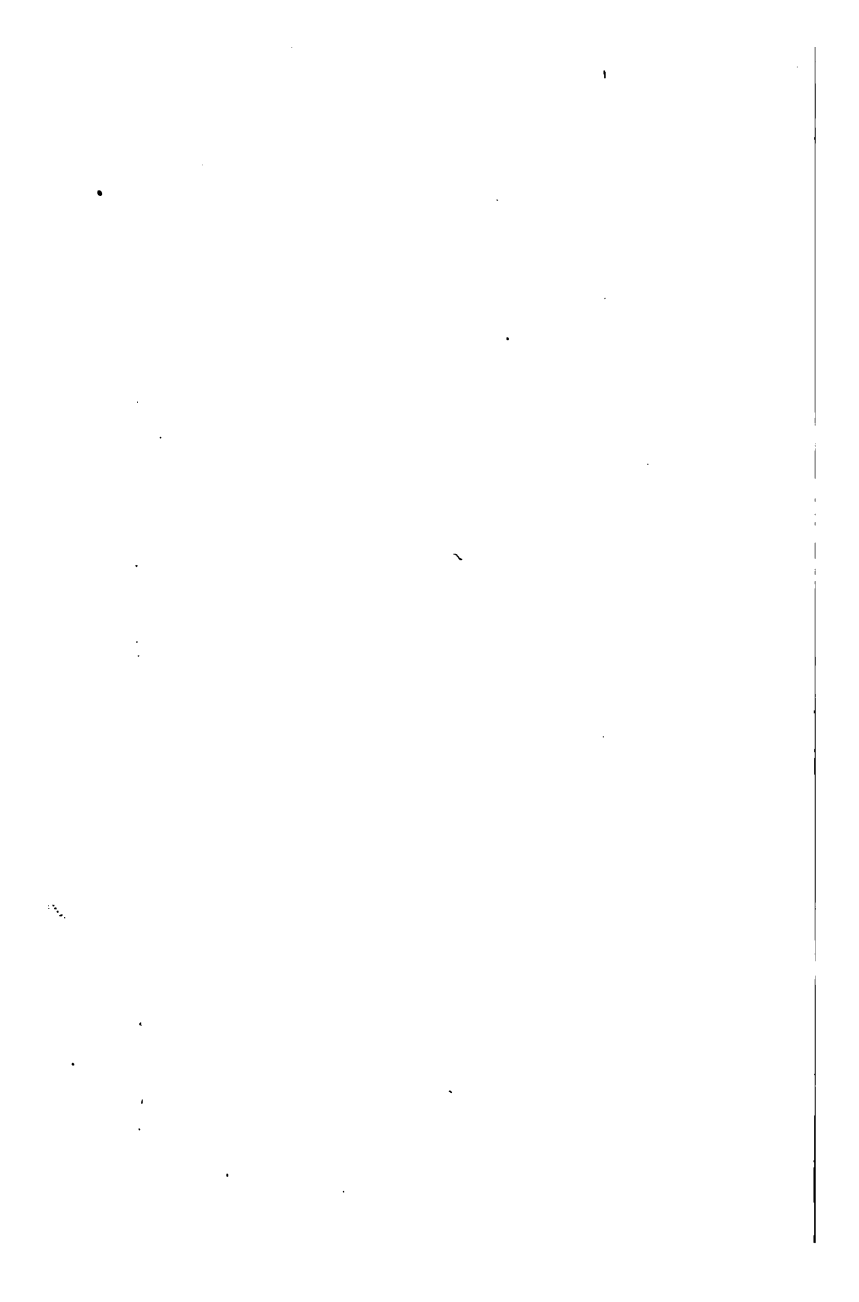
PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.



LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & CO.
BATH: R. E. PEACH, 8, BRIDGE STREET.

MDCCCLXXIII.

100. w. 239.



TO THE CONGREGATION OF
MARGARET'S CHAPEL, BATH,
AT WHOSE REQUEST
THE FOLLOWING SERMONS ARE PUBLISHED.
THIS LITTLE VOLUME
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY THEIR FAITHFUL BROTHER IN
CHRIST JESUS.

P R E F A C E.

THE subject of these Sermons is one of great importance in these days, the literature that has branched from its roots voluminous, and the differences of opinion among interpreters almost endless. Being fully aware of these facts, the writer acquiesced with the request to publish these discourses with great diffidence. In the course of preparing them for the press this feeling increased, and in revising the sheets the scanty and sketchy character of the whole made a painful impression on his mind, but it was too late to retract, and anything like extensive amplification was impossible. Poor as they are, they are sent forth with a prayer for the Divine blessing on their weakness, and with the hope that the reader may be induced by skimming the surface to dive into the depths, and bring up from the recesses of the Word many a precious gem as the reward of obedience to the command, "*Search the Scriptures.*"

SERMON I.

PREACHED ON THE SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT,
Nov. 24, 1872.

THE BEAST.

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.”—Revelations xiii. 1—2.

THIS is the last Sunday of the Ecclesiastical year. Once again, through God's mercy, we have enjoyed the privileges of the Gospel of Christ and the means of grace as the sacred seasons have revolved. We have sung once more our Christmas anthems over the Babe of Bethlehem, the child that was born and the son that was given for our salvation. With the wise men we have

watched the rising of the star of Jacob, with them worshipped the King and offered Him the incense of prayer and praise. We have stood by His side, under the shadows of Lent, and witnessed the temptation in the wilderness. Have walked with Him in the days of His ministry, marvelled at His miracles and listened to His parables, have wondered at His sore agonies in the garden, and been eye-witness of His sacrifice on Calvary, have beheld the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, and lifted up our Easter Hallelujah, as with Apostles and Holy Women we gazed on the glories of the risen Lord, and finally, as we stood in spirit, on the hill of Bethany, have caught the last glimpse of our ascending King and High Priest, as the cloud of glory folded Him in the embrace of light unapproachable.

Again, as the year rolled on, we have been gathered with the chosen few in the upper chamber on the morn of Pentecost, have heard the mighty rushing wind and seen the glory of the Shechinah like a central sun, and tongues of fire distributed like rays resting on the twelve. Again, we have hearkened to the principles and practice that spring from these doctrines—the architecture of our duties based and reared upon the foundation stones of faith and facts. By

these mercies of God we have been exhorted to yield our bodies, souls, and spirits as a holy and reasonable sacrifice to Him who died for us and rose again, in hope of the glory to be revealed at the second advent of our Saviour. But before that morning dawn the night that now is will gather gloom—a shroud of darkness that may be felt will settle down upon this Egypt. The hour before the sun-rise is the darkest and the coldest, and so the thickest crape will vest this earth for her funeral, before the jubilee trumpet shall proclaim the day of deliverance, and the voice of the Bridegroom bid the mourner arise and deck herself with the bridal robes of resurrection-glory.

Our blessed Lord in His great prophecy, uttered shortly before He suffered, forewarned us of tribulation such as had not been since the foundation of the world, neither after it should ever be the like (See St. Matthew xxiv). The earth beneath shall be wasted by famine, pestilence shall reap a fearful harvest. The sea and the waves shall roar. Earthquakes shall rend the rocks, and men, even while their hearts are terror-stricken, shall wage war one with another. Kingdom shall rise against kingdom and nation against nation, and the only rallying point, amid the general

confusion will be persecution of the saints of God. Whilst in heaven above the sun shall be girt with sackcloth of hair, the moon melt in blood, the stars shall be unsocketed and fall, and one vast ruin desolate creation. It is then, at this crisis hour, that midnight turns, and a whisper is heard—Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. Brethren, between us and the haven on the everlasting shores, where our hopes are fixed, there rolls a flood of trial and tribulation. Unbelief, rebellion against the Lord and His Christ, persecution of His people, and martyrdom of His Saints, must yet be witnessed upon earth; and the exaltation of the world, the pride of man, and the last triumph of sin and Satan, though short-lived, must yet be celebrated. “I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns—and upon his heads the name of blasphemy—and the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.”

It is our intention, during the Sundays in Advent (God sparing and helping us) to bring before you a brief sketch of unfulfilled prophecy—to consider the perils that threaten us in the last days—the rocks that are ahead before we reach the harbour. Our subjects will be those that present the most

prominent features in the prophecies of the future, the Beast, the Anti-Christ, the False Prophet, and their destruction at the coming of our Lord.

And, inasmuch as next Sunday, the first Sunday in Advent, this place will be otherwise occupied, I have ventured to anticipate—and desire to call your attention to-day to the first-mentioned of these enemies of God and of His truth.

Brethren, the subject of unfulfilled prophecy is one of vast importance, and requires sobriety of judgment on the one hand and simple implicit faith in the Word of God on the other. Let us join in prayer, therefore, that the Holy Spirit may give us a right judgment in all things, and that having before our eyes the danger and the deliverance, the cross and the crown, we may flee for refuge to Jesus, so that that day may not come on us unawares and find us unwatchful and unprepared.

In opening such a subject, it will be necessary to say a few words on the general interpretation of prophecy. More than half the Bible is composed of prophetic writings, as much or more of God's Holy Word delineates the future as describes the past. How important must be the knowledge of so great a portion of the Bible, and how, then, are we to arrive at a right understanding of the roll

that contains the "things that shall be?" We reply, by the same laws that we interpret the records of the "things that have been," the facts of history, or the definitions of doctrine, or of duty, that is, by the plain literal and grammatical meaning of the words and sentences in which the prediction is enshrined. Moreover, there are prophecies which have been beyond all controversy fulfilled, namely, those that foretold the SUFFERINGS of our Lord Jesus Christ. And how were these prophecies fulfilled? Were they not literally, grammatically, and exactly fulfilled? Christ's miraculous conception and birth had been declared by the prophets, and as they predicted so it came to pass. The death of Messiah, and the very mode in which He should suffer, by piercing were revealed both by Psalmist (Ps. xxii. 16), and prophets (Is. liii. 5, original; Zech. xii. 10), the whole scene of the crucifixion was painted, the cries of the persecutors and the prayers of the Sufferer were foreheard and registered by David, in the xxii. Psalm, a thousand years before all these things were fulfilled. A literal resurrection was foretold, and a literal resurrection is the foundation of our faith. If then we point to the exactness with which prophecy has hitherto been fulfilled, as an evidence of the truth of

revelation, must we not, to be consistent, admit that the same rule that obtained in the past, and at the First Advent, must also regulate the future and the features of the Second Advent, otherwise we shall have two systems of explaining the same book—two different canons of interpretation—and the trusty guide in one portion will mislead us in the other.

Further, it is noteworthy that the Jews interpreted the Scriptures, that concern the sufferings of Messiah, figuratively, and they rejected the Lord. And the Church of Rome has interpreted figuratively the prophecies which describe the future glories of Israel. This has been a fruitful source of error in these latter days, for after making Zion to be the same thing as the Church, and Jerusalem as Rome, it naturally followed that all the magnificent predictions that concern restored and regenerated Israel after the Second Advent were transferred to the Church of this dispensation, and the picture of the Church triumphant was supposed to be a painting of the Church Militant, and hence much of the assumption of unity and grandeur and infallibility arose from this plunder of the prophecies which shall yet be made good, in their proper time, to the children of the promise and the rightful

heirs of the inheritance. Having these warnings before us, we do well to take heed not to add to the Word by human speculation, and not to take away from it by unbelief or suppression. In its plain, ungarnished state, prophecy presents no enigma, but rather answers to the definition given by St. Peter—"a light that shines in a dark place."

But I know it may be urged, is not Scripture generally, and prophecy in particular, full of symbols, and these, surely, are figurative and need interpretation. It is true that symbols, as well as parables, abound in the Bible, but we are seldom left in ignorance as to the meaning. When our Lord said to His disciples, "How then will ye know all parables?" He gave them a key to the mystery. So, in the case of symbols, you will generally find the Divine interpretation annexed to the figure. Thus, in this very book, the symbol of the seven stars is *explained* to represent seven angels; candlesticks, churches; waters, peoples; Babylon, the reigning city; the dragon, the old serpent, and Satan. We do not deny that facts are represented by symbols, but we deny that the facts themselves are symbols, hence the difficulty, in interpreting prophecy, consists neither in the abstruseness of the subject nor in the symbols which illustrate its

mysteries, but in our ignoring these guides, and following the bent of our own imaginations. Once, therefore, the student of prophecy suffers his mind to invent ideas, and originate shrewd guesses, or construct hypothetic systems, the whole plan of God's design is lost, and if we walk in the light of the sparks we ourselves have kindled, what wonder is it if they soon die out, and we are left in greater darkness than ever.

Now to apply these remarks to the subject of our text. What is meant by the symbol of the Beast? and here we are at once referred to the original passage on which this is based. In Daniel, vii. ch., we read that the Seer beheld in vision four beasts come up out of the great sea (the great sea is always the Mediterranean), (See Numbers xxxiv. 6, &c.); a description then follows of the particular characteristics of these beasts, and it transpires in the description of the *fourth* beast that it had ten horns, thus identifying it with the subject of the vision of our text. Then, further on, we have the "interpretation of these things"—that these four beasts are four kings which shall arise out of the earth. But Daniel's heart yearned to know more about the fourth beast and its ten horns. And the reply given by the Angel inter-

preter was that the fourth beast shall be "the fourth kingdom upon earth," v. 23, and "the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise," v. 24.

To go back to the beginning of this prophecy, it is a striking fact that Scripture emphasises her teaching on this subject by always representing the enemies of God's church and people by the number *four*. Thus in Joel we have four kinds of locusts, or rather four stages in the development of the same insect, that spoil the land (Joel i. 4). In Zechariah there are four horns that scatter (Zech. i. 18, 19), and four chariots with divers coloured horses that walked to and fro on the earth (Zech. vii. 1—7). In this place in Daniel there are four beasts that raven, and in the Apocalypse there are four winds whose forces are bridled (Rev. vii. 1). And we have a parallel in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and Daniel's interpretation of it, the image which he saw was divided into four parts, of gold, silver, brass and iron, explained to be four kingdoms, (Dan. ii. 32, 33, 36—40), and once more it is noteworthy that the fourth section of this image consisted of the legs and feet, two divisions, east and west, and the toes represent the ten kingdoms that spring from this power, as in our text the horns delineate the same development.

The *Beast*, therefore, will be equivalent to a kingdom or king, for this symbol is frequently employed for both, the latter being always regarded as the representative of the former, and the kingdom being regarded as headed up in its king. These kingdoms, beyond doubt, are Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. "Thou art this head of gold," said the Seer to Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. ii. 38. His government was absolute. His will was law. "Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he saved alive." "After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee," v. 39. This was the Medo-Persian which gained the sovereignty when Belshazzar fell. "Thy kingdom is divided, said Daniel on that memorable night, "and given to the Medes and Persians," "and Darius the Median took the kingdom," ch. v. 28 and 31. The inferiority of this second empire was evident in that the king was subject to law, even to the laws of his own enacting, "the law of the Medes and Persians that altereth not," became proverbial, an imperfection which was singularly instanced in the inability of Ahasuerus to aid Mordecai by cancelling his own signature appended to the deed of destruction (See Esther ch. viii).

"And another third kingdom of brass,"

continued Daniel, "which shall rule over all the earth," v. 39. This was the Grecian kingdom, the kingdom of Alexander the Great, who when he had conquered the world sat down and wept, because he had no more to conquer. This kingdom was inferior to the former two, the ruler of the Grecian empire rested for his support upon the commanders of his army; the solitude of imperial dignity was encroached upon by his subordinates; the gold that had paled into silver was now deteriorated into brass.

"The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise," v. 40. Rome is compared to a metal still more degraded, the democratic element was the real basis of her being. The Cæsar, with all his power, was the expression of the Roman people rather than the independent tyrant. And amongst the nations that have derived their existence from the Fourth Empire, the clay of democracy is ever making inroads upon the iron of monarchic rule.

These kingdoms were also symbolized by four beasts. Babylon had for her escutcheon a compound of a lion and an eagle, significant of royalty. The Persian

was represented by a bear in the act of ravening, denoting its cruelty, Greece by a winged leopard, a figure of its rapid conquests, but the fourth beast was anonymous, the description however defines it as "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly ; and it had great iron teeth ; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it ; and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before ; and it had ten horns" (ch. vii. 7). It is with the last of these powers we have to do ; when St. John received this revelation, all the former three had passed away by absorption into the fourth, and that this is the Roman empire is beyond question. It is remarkable that throughout Scripture this power is described, but never distinguished by *name*, yet the identity is unmistakeable, the features are photographed, the portraiture is minute and exact. Daniel paints the picture, but writes underneath no name, but he enforces the epithet "strong" which is the meaning of the word *Rome*, and the horses in the fourth chariot, as seen in Zechariah's vision, ch. vi. 3, in addition to their colour are defined as *strong*. St. Paul reminds the Thessalonians of his oral teaching, and of the secret he imparted to them, "ye know what withholdeth," 2 Thess. ii. 6. And St. John

contents himself with detailing the inscription he beheld in vision "Mystery, Babylon," and disclosing the angelic communication, "the woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth," Rev. xvii. 5 and 18. The ancient fathers accounted for this reticence—a caution which they also observed—on the ground of the danger of incurring the wrath of the "eternal city" by predicting its downfall; but when the time had come for the empire to pass under new conditions, and the peril was past, the secret which the Church had known and kept became public property.

Now, what do we know about this fourth power—*historically*? We know that its sway was universal when Christ was born; that Cæsar Augustus lorded it over Judæa and ordered an enrolment of its inhabitants to be made. We know that Messiah stood arraigned before Pontius Pilate, an officer of Cæsar; that it was by the hands of Roman soldiers that He was bound and scourged and crucified and slain. We know that the same power laid siege to Jerusalem, "the city of the great King," and levelled her to the ground, burnt down the temple of God, crucified thousands of the children of Israel, slaughtered in war more than a million, and

scattered the residue like fragments of a mighty wreck throughout the wide world. We know that in every one of the derived nations—the toes of the mystic image—the ancient people have been a proverb and a hissing and a by-word. The cities of the fourth empire have been blackened with the ashes and made red with the blood of the burnt and butchered Jew. We know that the early teachers of the Gospel fared no better in the grasp of the beast that was very terrible—“The Christians to the lions” was the cry in the Roman Amphitheatre—and fire and cross and axe were the instruments employed to obliterate alike the Gospel and its followers.

One of the most prominent outlines, given to guide us in Scripture, is the antagonism that ever exists between Israel and the Gentile powers; or, in other words, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world, and as the condition of the former undergoes change, a corresponding transformation of marvellous adaptability is observable in the latter. The Jewish polity was broken up, her temple was burnt, her metropolis in the power of the heathen, Israel was no longer a nation, the daughter of Sion fell asleep, the nation was and still is in abeyance. The people, as a people

have remained stereotyped in the same spiritual deadness and the same earthly tribulation. And so, in strange parallel, the Babylonish system, as manifested in the fourth empire, about the same period underwent a striking transformation. Rome dropped the name of Pagan, abjured the Pantheon, and assumed the modest veil of Christian profession, and adopted Christianity as the national religion. But, alas, how she defaced it! It is the fearful prerogative of the Babylonish system in all stages of its history, and under all phases of its existence, both in the Old and New Testament times, to be wholly given to idolatry, and so no sooner had Christianity become adopted by Rome, than she began to introduce this leaven, and transferred the heathen worship into the Church, the names of the gods were changed, so much could not be said of the images, and at last Christendom accepted the startling proposition that image worship was not idolatry.

When the Reformation dawned, it was the same power that laid hands on the Bibles which were then first translated, and cast them into the flames, and pronounced a ban against all who read the Word of God—that seized on minister and people, young and old, women and children, and burnt them

at the stake. We know, too, and have painful experience at the present time, that the conflict is not yet at an end, that her emissaries are busy in seeking to entrammel our own Church in the former *iron* bondage, and once more trample our nation under her feet.

But what does Scripture unfold as to the *future* of the fourth kingdom? To be brief, the sketch is furnished us on the roll of prophecy. (1) First, that this kingdom, now so dislocated and divided into parts and petty kingdoms, shall rise again as a *united* kingdom. Its resurrection is the subject of our text. The ten daughter kingdoms, whether they have been already formed or are awaiting a new re-distribution of European and Asiatic territory, need not enter into our consideration. These kingdoms, symbolized by the horns of the beast and the toes of the image formed out of Rome, the fourth kingdom, shall be reunited. This, we are distinctly told in the xvii. ch. 12 and 13 verses of this book, "and the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." This confederacy will be the

last effort of the Babylonish apostasy, the superlative act of man's rebellion against God, a reviviscence of all evil systems that have gone before, a union of the ten kingdoms into one great centre, over which anti-Christ will become the autocrat, who will marshal the forces of Satan and the world against the Lord. This movement will probably take place in the same shaking of the nations, which will be the immediate cause of the return of the Jews to their own land and their becoming once more a nation upon earth.

(2) It is revealed that this power shall have universal dominion and will persecute the people of the Lord. Such is the testimony of the 7th and 8th verses of this chapter. When speaking of this kingdom under the form of the king its representative, it is said—"And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them ; and power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations ; and all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life."

(3) It is further disclosed to us that this Gentile conspiracy will cast off allegiance to, and acknowledgment of, God. Israel will be caught again in the snare of Babylon and

will receive one who comes in his own name (See John v. 43). The Church of Christ will be subjected to test and trial, for this kingdom will have a mark whatever that may be (God's people will know it, when the time comes) and whoso will not receive it shall neither be permitted to buy or sell (Rev. xiii. 16, 17), and fearful thought! all that receive it shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God for ever (Rev. xiv. 9, 10). Yet, strange to say, the pretensions of this power shall be peace and the welfare of mankind—its rule a mock millenium, its prince a parody on Messiah. "By peace he shall destroy many" (Daniel viii. 25). It would seem that religion will be regarded as a disturbing element to the concord of men, and that therefore this obstacle must be removed from the charter of this kingdom. First, Christianity will be assaulted, and Trinitarianism will be the object of attack (see 1 John ii. 22), then even Judaism, with its cold, bare Deism (see Dan. xi. 37), will be too much for this system to permit, and denial of all revelation and rebellion against God will be the code of faith and practice in this last outburst of the evil heart of man (see 2 Thess., ii. throughout).

(4) But the duration of this kingdom

in its power and tyranny shall be brief—"for the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened." We have three separate definitions of the length of this period. "Times, time and dividing of time," Dan. vii. 25, xii. 7; Rev. xii. 14, or two years, one year, and half a year. Again, "forty and two months," Rev. x. 2, xiii. 5, which is equivalent to that period, and, lastly, "one thousand two hundred and three score days," Rev. x. 3, xii. 6, which include the same space also. It would occupy far too much time to show that a day means a day, and not a year as figurative interpreters would have us believe. I would merely, in passing, say that the weeks of Daniel, which look to the English reader as if they supported that theory, are in the original expressed by an ordinal and not a cardinal number, the word here translated "week" signifies a septenary—seven of any things that may be referred to. In Daniel, 9th ch., the last unit of time mentioned is a year, and therefore the weeks are weeks, or sevenses of years and not of days, to be explained figuratively afterwards; this will be evident on a comparison of Daniel ix. 2 with 24. It may be named also that the true Septuagint version in this place inserts the word "of *years*."

We may add, that a comparison of the places where periods of time are the subject of prophecy, the literal interpretation invariably holds good. A few important examples may be useful to substantiate this statement. God predicted to Abraham that "his seed should be afflicted four hundred years," Gen. xv. 13. To the Israelites, "Your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years," Numb. xiv. 33. To Hezekiah, "I will add unto thy days fifteen years, Is. xxxviii. 5. To the captives at Babylon, "After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you," Jer. xxix. 10. Our Lord prophesied to the Jews, "The Son of man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," Matt. xii. 40, and, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," John ii. 19.

Such passages as those generally cited to support what has been termed the year-day system do not prove the point. Thus it is advanced that in Numb. xiv. 34 we read, "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years." Here, so far from a prophetic day denoting a year, the days spoken of are past, not future, and the years of suffering denounced are literal and not figurative

years. Similarly, in Ez. iv. 4—6, "I have appointed thee a day for a year." It will be seen by consulting the context that the prophet was to exhibit a symbolic *action*, rather than utter a prophecy, and therefore this passage could not be laid down as a principle or rule of interpretation of prophecy, the days on which he was to lie are simply stated, in this particular instance, to be symbolic of the years of Israel's iniquity. The year-day theory, moreover, was quite unknown to Christian antiquity, as is evident from the comments of the ancient fathers upon the various prophetic passages which contain mention of times and periods.

Then, at the close of this reign of terror, "The stone cut out without hands," "The stone which the builders rejected," shall smite the image on the feet, Daniel ii. 34. Mark on the *feet*, the part that typified the fourth kingdom, the Roman power, and grind it to powder, and all Gentile rebellion and apostasy, like Babel's Tower, shall fall struck with the lightning-flash of the glory of the King of kings.

A question arises of great interest and importance to ourselves. Will this confederacy involve England? Whether the Roman kingdom will extend beyond its old limits,

whether it will include the North of Europe and America, for instance, is uncertain ; but this seems certain that all that belonged to the Roman empire originally will again be subjected to its power in its last development. The confines of the empire included all England, and that part of Scotland which is South of the Friths of Forth and Clyde. It did not embrace the North of Scotland or Ireland, but England was within its grasp, and therefore it is but a legitimate inference that England will be again under its sway. It may go against our hopes, that England will be enslaved to the system of error, and against our pride that England, the monarch of the seas, will become a vassal kingdom in a great confederacy, and we may shudder at the thought that Anti-Christ, the son of perdition, may be our dictator. "Be not high-minded but fear," with the example of Judæa before us, what may not happen to our now favoured land, when we, like them, reap the fruits of our unbelief and unfaithfulness.

Lastly, by way of application and warning, are there not signs of this defection amongst us ? Let us not delude ourselves with the cry of peace, when there is no peace. True religion is distinctive, it makes one man to differ from another. The

rationalistic movement, and the multitudinous theory, as it has been called, would make a national Church broad, very broad,—would do away with creeds and confessions, doctrines and dogmas, and leave only a shell, which might be painted and decorated as beautiful as Romish superstition could make it, but there must be no dispute, no contending for the faith. This is man's unity. And this is patronized in high places and is winning its way far and wide amongst us. It is the religion of the worldly. A voice of warning comes to us from the word of prophecy. Let us beware of thus lapsing into error, lest our ship be carried out into a sea of bitterness and make wreck upon the shores of everlasting destruction. It is a warning to the careless and the slumbering, that Babylon is rising again, and one who shall unite in himself the craft and cruelty of Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar is at the door, and how can the unwatchful and unconverted withstand him ?

But to the believer there is peace in the prospect of tribulation, in darkness light. If you are called upon to witness, if such should be God's will concerning you ; fear not, strength will be given you even for martyrdom. Aged men and feeble women have suffered for their Lord before now, and

He who gave them grace to brave the scaffold and the axe, will never fail any that put their trust in Him. One thing is of the deepest importance to ourselves personally for our own everlasting safety; to have clear views of our entire dependence for pardon and peace on Christ and His finished work—a strong faith of our acceptance in Him, a consciousness of union with Him—to be temples of the Holy Ghost, separate from this present evil world, its follies and sins, to have our affections set on things above, to be looking for the Lord and longing for His kingdom. This is our true and only safeguard in the days of peril that are approaching. Is it so with us? This is a question of life or death for our own souls—for each individual soul—“for if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” We may live to see all these things come to pass. They may be already at the door. We may behold, not in vision, but in reality the beast of the latter day arise out of the sea, but through grace we shall not be deceived by the “old serpent” that gives him energy and authority, but we shall know his history and his doom. The Judge is at hand who will conquer

and crush him and give his body to the burning flame, and rescue His own faithful soldiers and servants from his grasp and receive them to rest and everlasting glory.

SERMON II.

PREACHED ON THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT,
Dec. 8, 1872.

THE ANTICHRIST.

“Ye have heard that Antichrist shall come.”—1st Ep. John, ii. 18.

LAST time we met together we endeavoured to show you from Scripture, without any addition to the Word, or any interpretation of man being forced upon its testimony, that the four beasts seen by Daniel in the vision recorded in the seventh chapter of his book, were the four great kingdoms of Gentile power, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, and in a brief historical sketch of the fourth kingdom we saw that its features had been accurately painted in prophecy as “strong as iron” and “exceeding dreadful.” The Roman Empire

crucified the Lord Jesus, destroyed Jerusalem, first profaned and then burnt down the temple of God, and scattered the chosen people over the wide world. Neither was this power the scourge to punish the unfaithful of the old covenant only; but her hands became stained with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, whom she relentlessly dragged to her scaffolds, nailed to her crosses, burnt at the stake, and exposed to the wild beasts in her amphitheatre.

We saw also that a period arose when probably from motives of state policy, as Christianity had spread over the greater half of her population, Rome embraced the *profession* of the gospel as the national religion, and in process of time the empire passed into the phase of the papacy. The system was the same, the accidents only were altered. Ecclesiastical Rome, just as Imperial Rome, has throughout the pages of history maintained her predicted character for tyranny and persecution. This we illustrated by her condemnation of many martyrs at the period of the Reformation, whose only accusation was that they had translated God's Holy Word into the vernacular, and believed and taught others to believe what that Word revealed about God's way of saving mankind from death

and hell, and had protested against the prevalent idolatry that had subverted the Gospel of Christ.

Further we saw that as Jerusalem and Babylon are ever to be in opposition,—when Israel was dispersed, and her nationality in abeyance, and Gentile Christianity came in as a parenthesis in Jewish history, an engrafting on the olive-tree—so the Babylonish system also passed into such a form that she could tempt and lead into idolatry these offshoots of Israel, as she had before ensnared and led captive the ancient stock; but further, that when the Jewish people shall again be restored, and resume their corporate and national character, and come upon the scene of action amongst the kingdoms of the world, then shall the fourth empire, the Roman, collecting the forces of her ten daughter kingdoms, return to her former condition as a temporal power, and be resuscitated by an evil resurrection, and reascend in a new form from the Great Sea, as we then learnt from the vision of St. John, “I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy, and the dragon gave him his power and his throne, and great authority.”

Now, last time we called your attention specially to the *kingdom*, to-day we purpose to bring before you the portraiture 'of the *king* of that kingdom, as painted on the pages of Scripture, of whose development and character there was a much clearer knowledge in apostolic times and amongst the early fathers also, than in our own day. St. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, could say, "Remember ye not that when I was with you I told you these things, and now ye know what withholdeth" (2 Thess. ii. 5, 6). St. John could appeal to his knowledge of futurity, in which also those whom he addressed participated, in the words of our text, "Ye have heard that Antichrist shall come."

May God the Holy Ghost continue to us the blessing of His teaching, give us light from His Word, and deliver us from the evils of the latter day.

I.—The first thing that strikes us is the title of this enemy of God and man—the Antichrist. This name by which he is most generally known, is only used by St. John in his epistles. What is the meaning of this fearful name? *Anti* may bear in composition with other words two significations; (1) *in opposition to*, as in the familiar words

antidote and *antagonist*; or in the place of, instead of,—a meaning which I think it has in no English word, but it has this force in the original word, which we translate “ransom” (1 Tim. ii. 6), and also in the title of the Roman ruler, which we translate “Deputy” (Acts xiii. 7)—really one who occupies the room and represents the authority of the highest power. According to the former explanation Antichrist will mean the “*opposer of Christ*,” and according to the latter, one who pretends to represent Christ, a *false Christ*, a *vicar of Christ*. Some writers have urged strongly the latter acceptance of the word solely; but St. Paul seems to have decided the question rather in favour of the former interpretation when speaking of this “lawless one” in 2 Thess. ii. 4, he defines him as “*one that opposeth*,” where this same preposition is found forming part of the word. The more prominent meaning therefore of this name is the *adversary* or *opponent of Christ*, a *contra-Christ*. And yet at the same time we must not forget that it is no uncommon feature in prophetic titles and words to contain two separate, though closely connected, lines of thought in which it would be impossible to elect one to the exclusion of the other; nor would it be wise to attempt the task, as it

would appear that one may receive its fulfilment at one period and in one dispensation, and the second equally lay claim to its fulfilment at another time and in a different dispensation. And this double meaning must not be altogether lost sight of in this word, for it would seem to be one of the features in the career of this awful being that he will impose upon the Jews that he is their Messiah, and upon the Gentiles that he is the "coming man," who shall remove all social and political difficulties, and establish a reign of peace and concord amongst mankind. He is then both an *adversary of Christ* and a *mock Christ*.

II.—In the second place, let us turn to the testimony of Scripture concerning this subject, and here we would again remind you that we espouse no human theories, but simply take the Word as we find it, observing the canon we have laid down already, that as all prophecies which have received their final fulfilment have been fulfilled literally, so also in like manner all that are awaiting their fulfilment in the future will follow the same rule.

Now, as Scripture abounds with predictions and types of the Messiah and Saviour of the world, so also do its pages

detail to us parallel predictions and types of the adversary of Christ, and the arch-enemy of man. It would be impossible in the scope of one brief discourse to give anything like an exhaustive account of this "son of perdition." Let us however glance at a chain of some prominent predictions which relate his rise and progress.

In Gen. iii. 15 we find the Redeemer of mankind promised as the seed of the woman, and we also read of the seed of the serpent, and everlasting antagonism existing between them. Now the seed of the woman is confessedly one, our Lord Jesus Christ; and consequently the seed of the serpent must be also an individual, and as all the good are headed up in Christ, the representative Man, so all evil will be headed up, and will find its development in the seed of the serpent, the Antichrist, who shall come.

In Gen. xlix. we have Jacob's prophecies uttered over his sons; and (in vv. 16-18) he exclaims concerning Dan, "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an *adder* in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD." The first feature that strikes the student of prophecy in this passage is, that in the original,

the word we translate *adder* is clearly built upon the verb, which in the former passage of Genesis we translate *bruise*. The connection between Dan and the seed of the serpent seems therefore to be at least hinted at, and the *salvation* of Jehovah in the last clause, seems to be opposed to the *judgeship* of Dan: If we turn to Judges xviii., we shall find that Dan first introduced idolatry into Israel, and afterwards became one of the centres of the calf-worship established by Jeroboam, "who made Israel to sin." If we turn to Rev. vii., an account is given us of the sealing of the twelve tribes of Israel in the last days, and Dan is omitted in the list of blessings. These facts led the early fathers to the conclusion that Antichrist would be of the tribe of Dan.* And thus a singular parallelism appears, for there are only two individuals in the Bible branded with the fearful title of "son of perdition"—Judas, one of the twelve apostles at the first advent, and Antichrist amongst the twelve tribes at the second advent.

We now come to the Book of Psalms, and here, without dwelling on particular passages,

* Irenæus (c. 30) and Theodoret (in Genesin, quæst. 110) express this opinion, which seems to have been generally held.

I would briefly state that the imprecatory psalms, and particularly Ps. cix., which have presented so great a difficulty to many, are best explained as prophetic prayers that will be uttered when Antichrist shall have dominion, and the suffering Church shall know their foe, and pray, and rightly pray, for the extinction of the Satanic tyrant.

In Isaiah xi. we meet with a description of the attributes of Our Blessed Lord, the King of Israel, and of the characteristics of His kingdom of peace and righteousness; but in the preface to the formation of this kingdom we read that "with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked one" (v. 4)—words which are afterwards quoted by St. Paul to prove the destruction of Antichrist (2 Thess. ii. 8). Again, in ch. xiv. 12 and following verses, we have a graphic narrative of the proud pretensions and career of Antichrist, apostrophised under the name of Lucifer, which it would seem he had assumed, as a parody on the name of Messiah, the *Morning Star*, which is followed by a prediction of his downfall.

We now turn to the Book of Daniel, who gives a clear description of the history of Antichrist. In ch. vii. 24-25 we read, "And the ten horns out of this kingdom are

ten kings that shall arise ; and another shall rise after them ; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings, and he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws ; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times, and the dividing of time." In ch. viii. and verses 9-12, " And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great towards the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven ; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself, even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of the sanctuary was cast down." And further, in verses 23-25, " And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power ; and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause

craft to prosper in his hand ; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many. He shall also stand up against the Prince of Princes ; but he shall be broken without hand." Again, in ch. ix. and verses 26 and 27, literally translated "And the people of a prince who shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and his end shall be in the overflowing." "And he shall confirm a covenant with the multitude for one week, and at the half of the week he shall cause sacrifice and oblation to cease, and upon the pinnacle of abominations shall be that which causeth desolation, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the causer of desolation."

Another account is given of him, in ch. xi., too long for quotation, the purport of which is to show the sufferings of God's people under his tyranny, and his pride and presumption against God. He shall renounce the God of his fathers, and "the desire of women," probably the Messiah, whom all Hebrew women desired to bear ; but he will honour the "god of forces," that is military prowess ; his dominions will be wide, his wealth great, and he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace in the glorious holy mountain ; yet he shall come to his end.

and none shall help him. That these Old Testament prophecies had not been fulfilled when Christ came, is clear from the words found in all three of the synoptic Gospels, when our Lord referred to this prophecy, "Whoso readeth, let him understand;" and that they have not yet been exhausted, whatever partial or typical fulfilment they may have received, at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, or afterwards, is manifest from the statement of ch. xii., that these things shall be when the *great tribulation comes*, and the *resurrection of the dead* shall immediately follow.

We now turn to the pages of the New Testament. From the description given by Daniel, and the frequent mention of the *wilfulness* or *lawlessness* of this evil tyrant, the *Lawless One* became a synonym of Antichrist. If we turn to our Lord's prophecy concerning the end, in Matt. xxiv. 11, we read, "And because *iniquity* shall abound"—literally, *lawlessness*, by which term the character of the period is described during which Antichrist shall hold sway. In John v. 43, our Lord gives a clear prediction that Israel will receive this false one as Messiah. "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye

will receive." We now pass on to the celebrated prophecy of St. Paul (in 2nd Thess. ii. 3, 4), making slight variations in the translation, "Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, except *the apostacy* come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, the one that opposeth and exalts himself above all that is called God, or is an object of worship, so that he sits in the temple of God, displaying himself that he is God." And in the 8th and 9th verses, "And then shall the lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of His mouth and destroy with the manifestation of His presence; even him whose presence is after the energy of Satan in all miraculous power, and signs, and wonders of a lie."

St. John, in his 1st Ep. ii. 22, gives us a further explanation of the characteristics of the man of sin: "Who is the liar, but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ. He is the Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son."

In Rev. xiii. 7-8, we have the persecuting power of Antichrist, as the head of the fourth kingdom, presented to our view. "And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him

over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations."

Again, as the duration of his kingdom is limited, as has been already seen, to "time, times and dividing of time," so we see in the 5th verse the prosperity of Antichrist will extend over the same space: "And power was given him to continue forty and two months." During this period he will oppress Jerusalem, as we are told in ch. xi. 2: "The holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months;" and God's two witnesses, the next verse informs us, "shall prophesy" at that time "a thousand, two hundred, and threescore days"—a period of the same duration, and God will prepare a place in the wilderness for His Church, to preserve her from utter extinction during the same season of "a thousand two hundred and three-score days" (ch. xii. 6).

During this night of horror, it would seem that the tyrant will be engaged in establishing his rule over mankind by the most unscrupulous edicts (ch. xiii.); but at last symptoms of judgment from on high will be manifest in the outpouring of divine plagues upon the earth (ch. xvi.). Babylon falls, but the ten horns, the factors of the system, after having helped the overthrow,

form a new combination, and give their power to the Beast, and unite in the mad effort of making war against the Lamb, whose advent they seem to be expecting (ch. xvii. 12-14). But this frantic rebellion is but for an instant. Heaven opens, and He that is faithful and true, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and from whose mouth issues a two-edged sword, comes down from the right hand of the Father. Before Him the wild revolt is quelled and crushed—the Antichrist is broken without hand, consumed with the glory-presence of the Lord, and cast alive into the lake that burneth with brimstone—and the kings that abetted his conspiracy, and the armies that followed him are given to the fowls of heaven and devoured (ch. xix.).

Parallel with the word-painting of prophecy, is the portrait-painting of the types. Now, just as our Lord had types of Himself, each one supplying some feature in His work of salvation, so also are there types of Antichrist, and his work of destruction. Such was Nimrod, the mighty freebooter, in defiance of God (Gen. x. 9), who went to Assyria (verse 11, margin), and built the Tower of Babel, to resist the right hand of the Most High. Such was Sennacherib, who boasted that he would be like the Most

High. Such was Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed the Temple and wasted Israel. Such, more emphatically, was Antiochus Epiphanes, who massacred the Jews, polluted the Temple, and set up an idol in the Holy of Holies.

We have thus glanced at the foreshadowings of the man of sin ; and the literal inference we draw from these statements, succinctly put, is, that in the latter day, immediately before the coming of our Lord, there will arise a man energised and instigated by Satan—Satan's representative on earth, an infidel and a scoffer, most likely of Israelitish origin—who shall come into power secretly and peaceably—shall deceive the nations of the world, who shall be ripe for revolt against the truth, and ready to believe the lie ; that he will be at the head of the fourth kingdom, the Roman empire, which will rise into great power and influence under his reign, in a renovated form ; that he will promise men a millennium of his own making by framing international confederacies, in which God will be ignored and the Gospel set aside ; that the Jews who will be then in their own land, still unbelieving and unconverted, will receive him as the Messiah (it may be that he will be the chief agent in their restoration) ; that

the nations of the old Roman empire, and perhaps some of those that lie outside those confines, will be led astray by his fascination, and give their power unto the beast; that he will make a covenant with the Jews for seven years, but at the half of that time he will break his covenant and persecute them as well as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; that he will parade himself as God upon earth, and require Divine honours to be awarded him; that he shall prosper and practise for three years and a half, and then the plagues of Egypt shall be re-enacted, which probably will occupy the remaining three years and a half of the year-week, and the Antichrist shall come to an end by the stroke of the Lord. The great duel shall be fought between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and the Lord shall hurl the enemy, quick and quivering, into the lake that burneth.

III.—Having thus traced the history of Antichrist, a few general remarks may be made. It has been objected to the close following of Scripture, that so many ages are thus passed over in silence, and that prophecy is made to refer to a contracted space of seven years. Scripture not only

says it shall be so, but also supplies a parallel. There were 4000 years of prophetic utterances concerning redemption; 4000 years of anxious expectation, and yet our Lord's ministry, that fulfilled all, occupied only three, or three and a half, years. So the hope of the Church is now set on the Saviour's second advent, and all the past centuries will be gathered up into a focus-point—in the day of Christ.

Again the question may be put—Is not the Papacy, is not Mahometanism, are not all the other systems that have desolated Christendom specified in prophecy? Most assuredly. "Even now are there many Antichrists," saith our context. There has ever been an Antichrist in every generation; but these are types of the One who shall hereafter be manifested, who will exhaust the letter of Scripture, not figuratively or partially, but perfectly and exactly; these are all tributary streams that fall into and form the final vortex of iniquity. Thus, as will have been gathered, we associate the Papacy with the Babylonish system as it exists in this dispensation. Rome occupies the feet of the image, and the Roman kingdoms are represented by the toes. Papal Rome, therefore, is the present exponent of the system; but out of

this fourth empire will spring one who will be the last climax of lawlessness and idolatry, who will combine all the evil which has gone before, and far outstrip and eclipse all his predecessors.

Further. It is a difficulty to some minds how, if prophecy is thus to be interpreted, any can be found to fulfil its declarations. Whereas, if the interpretation be figurative, the parable may be made known to some, but hidden from others. All will confess that the prophecies relating to the first advent, were fulfilled literally. If we take the 22nd Psalm, and stand under the Cross, we shall see that the Messiah suffered exactly as was predicted—the stripes, the piercing, the lots, are foretold—nay more, the very words of the prophet were taken up by the Pharisees. “He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him; let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in him” (verse 8, and Matt. xxvii. 43); they knew not what they did. Judas—his sin, his doom had been defined (see Psalms xli. and cix.) yet he fulfilled all. Take what is before our eyes. Is there not a plain prediction that in the last days some shall forbid to marry, and command to abstain from meats (1 Tim. iv. 3), and yet is there not a Church that *boasts* that she does these

very things? Does not Scripture tell us in the last days Antichrist shall deny the Father and the Son (John ii. 22); deny that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (iv., 3)? And what do we hear on all sides? The fundamental doctrines of the faith are being denied; the Deity of the Son, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Inspiration of Scripture, the eternity of woe, are all being canvassed and rejected. And if this sad anarchy is not arrested, Satan will get such a hold on men, that they will soon rush into the depths of Antichristian rebellion; and as before the deluge of water, so before the deluge of fire, wickedness will revel in the world, and the scoff against the notion of a coming judgment will be echoed from continent to isle. It would seem that Satan's snare will be to persuade men that, with the discoveries of science, they may be able to do all things, even to resist the Lord himself; for we read that the nations of the earth, and their armies shall be gathered together to make war with the Lamb (Rev. xvii. 14 and xix. 19). If Nimrod, the great rebel, built a tower to defy a flood, will his posterity, ripened in iniquity, and lashed on by Satan, be better than their prototype. If these things were done in the green tree, what

shall be done in the dry? Oh, rather than question the testimony of Scripture, let us pray for deliverance from those things that are coming on the earth. The droppings of the storm are upon us, the whirlwind is rising, the earthquake rumbling under our feet. Men may scoff and say, as it has been predicted they will, "Peace and safety." "Where is the promise of His coming?"—but we hold our Bibles in our hands, and the word written therein is this, "Ye have heard that Antichrist shall come."

And, oh! picture to yourselves that reign of terror, when Antichrist is come! Who shall endure to the end? What arguments will that child of the devil, full of all subtlety, advance? What imposing force will his intellect exercise? How will his grandeur dazzle, his successes disarm, his miracles confound all opposition? How plausible will be his proposal to the world at large, to ignore the old revelation, when he points at all the battles and bloodshed that have been perpetrated in the name of religion, to the heart-burnings and differences in families that have arisen from two being set against three, and three against two, to the schisms that have rent churches, and the hard names fellow Christians have called each other. In contrast

to all this, he will promise peace by obliterating the occasion of disagreement; men have learnt to govern themselves, the high moral sense is enough, we need no restraints acting on our fears—Time is enough for us to enjoy—Eternity is a fable, Parliaments, and cabinets, and nations—rulers and ruled, will applaud the oracle. He will point to the rapid spread of his system, and argue its suitability to the wants of men, and contrast it with the march of the Gospel so slow through the coldness of its advocates, and if any dares to raise his voice to expose the fallacy of the utterances of the “mouth that speaketh great things,” he will be silenced with a miracle, or the shout of the multitude, “Away with him!” Oh, what grace of head in the midst of such surroundings will it require to “consider the poor and needy one,” to understand the true Messiah in His humiliation and suffering, and what grace of heart to confess the lowly Nazarene in the face of the gilded tyrant. What a mercy it is, brethren, the Scripture has not left us unwarned of the evil, lest that day should take us by surprise. Prophecy tells us of dangers in the future, dangers that may be at the doors, that a crisis is at hand, that a furnace must be passed through, and

implores us to take heed that we be not deceived—"Ye have heard that Antichrist shall come."

My brethren, let no one say that prophecy is a dead letter, or the study of the future has no profit. It is a fearful thought that all shall receive the mark of the beast, except those whose names are in the Book of Life—that all the world will follow Antichrist. Coming events cast their shadows before them. Look at the doubts and unbelief festering on all sides, at the unwillingness to receive the inspired Word and its plain teaching. Listen to the revilings against missionary effort whispered around us, and mark another feature also of our day, how men will lay hold of any interpretation however forced, however visionary, if only it tells them that the fulfilment of predicted woes is past, that we have seen the worst, that the persecutions spoken of in the pages of prophecy received their accomplishment three hundred years ago, or that Antichrist is being consumed by the ministry of the Gospel, or is a sick man sinking already under his death-blow. Oh, brethren, beware lest this pleasant security be broken in upon by the thunder-clap of literal fulfilment, and Antichrist catch you as unsuspecting prey, and you find

yourselves linked to his infidel confederacy, and become a partaker in his plagues.

Only one refuge is safe—there is a Rock in the midst of the waters of tribulation, Jesus the Saviour; choose Him for your refuge, lay hold on the Atonement in all its fulness and freeness—pray more for the presence and power of the Holy Ghost. Make sure of your footing in the kingdom of grace—then will you not be led astray. And when Antichrist shall rise with his flatteries and pretensions, and the worldly and careless, the ungodly and unconverted shall regard him as a man for the times, and a benefactor of the world, and shall fall blindfold into his net, and make their boast of his mark, grace shall be given you to protest against the lie, and hold to the truth of God; and though the struggle may be great, yet the Lord will support you; though the furnace be heated sevenfold, yet the form of the Son of God shall be with you. And when the great foe shall be smitten, and his followers destroyed, those that endure to the end shall be welcomed with the “Well done good and faithful servant.” “To him that overcometh will I give to dwell in the paradise of God.”

SERMON III.

PREACHED ON THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT,
Dec. 15, 1872.

THE FALSE PROPHET.

"The false prophet that wrought miracles."—Rev., xix. 20.

ON the two previous occasions we have proved from Holy Scripture that the fourth kingdom, the Roman empire, will reappear in a united and corporate form. The nations that are now fragments of the former empire, shall be reconstructed. The dislocated arches and columns of the old building shall undergo a restoration under Antichrist as the architect, and shall be amalgamated, and consolidated into one vast confederacy. The *religion* of this community will be denial of the Father and the Son, and its laws the behests of the tyrant

usurper. We have seen that Antichrist will hold rule over this empire, that he will be hailed by the nations hitherto perplexed with their political entanglements and religious embroilments, as an arbiter and peace-maker; that at first he will deceive men with flatteries and gain his destructive power over them by his pretensions of peace, till he shall become an absolute autocrat, and lead his victims blindfold to destruction; that the Jews will first hail him as a friend and helper, and at last acknowledge him as Messiah, and will give him the honours they refused to give to the rightful King, a place in the temple, and divine adoration; that after three and a half years, he will break his covenant with them, and turn to be their bitterest foe; and when in the very act of gathering his armies and annihilating the ancient race, the Lord their Avenger, will descend from Heaven with the trumpet-blast, and smite the arch-enemy with the breath of His mouth, and consume him with the epiphany of His presence. Such is the sum of what we have gathered hitherto from the plain words of Scripture. We have, however, another character not yet referred to, who comes upon the theatre of action in the last days, in company with the Antichrist:

he is his assistant in the evil work of the world's deception—his spiritual coadjutor, and the viceroy of his kingdom. The shape of the original of this verse, shows the closest connection between these evil powers—he is the associated false prophet—a kind of familiar spirit—a medium whose wonder-working agency is exercised in the presence of the Beast. The lying prophet or pretended prophet, for the name, like that of Antichrist, is capable of two interpretations, influences both Jews and Gentiles to accept his government, and binds his authority upon the devotees of the delusion, by branding them with the mark of the Beast—which is the seal of perdition. Such is the fearful office of the being that forms the subject of our text to-day. “The false prophet that wrought miracles.”

May the Holy Spirit guide us now and at all times into the whole truth, and keep us from false prophets and false teaching and all delusion for evermore!

I.—A subject of general importance meets us on the threshold of our inquiries—the meaning of the term *prophet*. The word in itself implies nothing more than a *spokesman* or *publisher*; but to restrict the idea intended to the limits of this word, as

it appears in its Greek costume, is to ignore the pedigree and history of the title. The idea of the Scripture prophet originates in Hebrew, and not in Greek, and therefore we must seek its true force in that language. The radical idea of the Hebrew word is strictly *derivation*—the figure enshrined being the bubbling up or issuing of water from a fountain—hence the *prophet* is really one who derives his knowledge from God, by word or vision, or by inspiration resting on his spirit. But how came we, then, to employ the word *prophet* to enunciate this idea? The answer is very simple. Words in heathen vocabularies often represent thoughts which are so essentially evil, that they cannot be adapted so as to become definitions of the true religion. The radical meaning is so sinful and satanic that it is impossible to convert them, or break them in to do service in the cause of holiness and truth. Now the Greeks believed that their priests and priestesses derived information from their gods. In many cases the “deceivers and deceived” inhaled a noxious gas, which arose from some fissure in the earth, and was supposed to be the oracle of the Deity. This inhalation caused temporary delirium, and the incoherent ravings and mutterings that followed were taken down by an

attendant, who translated them into an adroit, and often double, meaning, to meet or evade the exigencies of the inquirer. The medium of this information was accordingly called by a name which signifies "*madman*," and for this reason the word, which implied preternatural information, could never be reformed or regenerated: it embodied the idea of preternatural information, but its revelations were from beneath, and not from above. The translators, therefore, of the Old Testament into the Greek language, between 200 and 300 years before our Lord's coming on earth, were necessitated to seek another word, and they found "*prophet*" ready to hand, the title of the *interpreter*, or the *publisher* of the oracle. This word had no *radical* evil in itself, and therefore could be applied in a good sense, and hence this term became the adopted child of the Church of God; but it only covers one half, and that the least important half, of the original ground occupied by the word which it professes to translate. The true prophet, therefore, was one who received revelations from God: he spoke not of himself, his prophecy was not of private or his own unfolding, but he spoke as he was moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. i. 20-21).

On the other hand, the false prophet derives his influence, like that of the old heathen soothsayers, from beneath. His teacher is the evil one, who gives the Beast his power, and his throne and great authority; his inspiration is infra-natural, and his mission is described as mainly instrumental in leading mankind captive in the chains of error, and fomenting the last rebellion against the Lord of Glory.

II.—Secondly. As last Sunday we traced the Scripture statements concerning Antichrist, so now let me refer you to those that speak of his vicegerent and prime minister, the false prophet. We have seen that our Lord uttered a prophecy concerning Antichrist—"If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John v. 43); and so in like manner in Matt. vii. 15, He is reported to have warned His hearers "to beware of false prophets who shall come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves." And again in chap. xxiv. 5, 11, when speaking of the final crisis of this dispensation, He makes a plain declaration that in company with false Christs "shall many false prophets arise and deceive many." In exact harmony with these predictions we find a further and more pre-

cise expansion of the same subject in the visions of the Apocalypse ; the sheep's clothing is reproduced in the horns of the lamb, and the association between the false Christs and false prophets is sustained in the second beast whose power is exercised in the presence of the first beast.

We now turn to the several Scriptures which immediately refer to this abettor of Antichrist. Rev. xiii. 11 relates his rise and occupation : " And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him (*i. e.* in his presence), and he causeth the earth (or land) and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast which had the wound by a sword and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and

cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed, and he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." The instrumentality by which he works is related in chap. xvi. 13, 14: "And I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet; for they are the spirits of devils working miracles." His destruction is revealed in our context, "The beast and the false prophet were cast, alive, into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone." And chap. xx. 10, discloses their eternal perdition, "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

The first of these passages tells us that he comes with an apparently mild countenance, but his teaching is that of a dragon or destroyer; that he is the chief instrument of the first beast in his presence, and that he causeth the earth or the land, that is,

the holy land (for the word may imply both, and Jerusalem appears to be the centre of Antichrist's manœuvres), and its inhabitants to worship the Beast. To bring about this delusion he performs miracles, and it is specially named that he brings down fire from heaven in the sight of men. There must be some significant purpose here. We are at once reminded of a parody upon the miracle of Elijah. The worship of Baal,—that is, of the Sun or Fire worship, had overspread the land of Israel through the influence of the Tyrian Jezebel. Elijah proposed the very province over which the idolators professed their god presided to be the test of true deity. "The god that answers by fire let him be god." We know the sequel,—how the Baalites invoked, and none answered; but Jehovah, at the cry of His prophet, sent down the sacred flame, and consumed the sacrifice. The miracle was a test of truth. Now Antichrist comes "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness and miracles of a lie," *i. e.* to support a lie, and the false prophet is stated to bring down fire from heaven to support his claims. Can we trace further any plausible reason for this miracle being chosen? We have already said that the earth or land means the land of Israel:

that Antichrist will profess to be the Messiah; and that he will probably be the immediate cause of the restoration of that people. When the Jews are restored, they will naturally rear a temple and endeavour to replace the system of sacrifice as in times of old. This seems pointed at in the last chapter of Isaiah, verses 1-3. They *could* rear a temple and build their altars, but the fire that formerly burnt their sacrifices had first fallen from heaven, and without that inauguration of their worship they dare not offer sacrifice. Now this seems to be the turning-point in the assumption of Antichrist. This adulterous generation would naturally say, as you will remember their forefathers did to the Lord, "If you are what you profess to be, give us the sign from heaven." And He will give it, and God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie, and Antichrist will be accepted there and then as the Hope of Israel. Now, mark further, having gained deification for Antichrist, "so that he sitteth in the temple of God, displaying himself that he is God" (2 Thess. ii. 4), the false prophet takes another step: he persuades the people of the land to make an image to the Beast, and he gives breath to that image, so that it speaks and

pronounces judgment against those that will not worship it. Now, all this seems to be so very marvellous, indeed, so much so, that, were it not the calm declaration of the Word of God, we might hesitate to give credence, or might be inclined to explain away the revelation by a figurative interpretation. But remember whose minister the false prophet is, and what power Satan has over mankind to deceive when his chain is unfastened, and the roaring lion is left at liberty to range and raven where he will. Moreover, before we set aside anything as too marvellous, let us see whether Scripture has not given us something like a parallel in history, some type that may be amplified. If we turn to Daniel iii. we find a great image was erected by Nebuchadnezzar on the plains of Babylon. Babylon was the first of the beast-kingdoms, and has given a name to the whole system — "*Mystery, Babylon the Great.*" Nebuchadnezzar was a type of Antichrist; he commanded all to worship the image, which was a symbol (like this one) of his empire and greatness. We know, too, that there were Jews that would not bow down to the idol, or that which the idol represented, and that they were, for their refusal, condemned to the furnace, from which, it is

also to be noted, the presence of the Messiah, the form of the Son of God, delivered them. It is true that no vocal powers are attributed to this statue, but the parallel in all other points is significant, and the last end of idolatry will be worse than the first.

Again, this prophecy does not stand alone. In Dan. xi. 36-38, we have a description of the irreligion, and what always accompanies infidelity, the superstition of Antichrist. We read there "in his estate," or rather *on his pedestal* "shall he honour the God of forces," the symbol of earthly powers—or military prowess; this is exactly parallel to the idol of Nebuchadnezzar, and also to the image of the Beast, of the passage now before us.

Again, in Dan. ix. 27, we read "upon the pinnacle of abominations shall be that which causeth desolation." This will be some idolatrous erection, perhaps identical with the image of the Beast. And to this passage our Lord is reported, as we have already reminded you, to have called attention, as though there were some special features of importance characteristic of this prophecy, "whoso readeth, let him understand."

Summing up, therefore, these testimonies,

as we did those that relate to Antichrist, we gather that the false prophet will be the vicegerent and abettor of Antichrist; that probably, while that great deceiver is absent from Jerusalem on his wars or schemes, he will erect an image in his honour, and as a symbol of his greatness and his kingdom, like the golden idol on the plains of Dura; that this image will, by an infra-natural miracle, by the power of Satan utter oracles and give orders, and pass sentence of life and death, and receive worship from the deluded followers of this strange superstition, which will be the consummation of idolatry. The next act of the false prophet will be to brand all the supporters of this apostacy with a badge or mark—the mark of the Beast, containing a number, “the number of a man.” Volumes of guesses have been written on this subject; probably none will know the meaning, till it shall be verified by fulfilment. The only interpretation really worth having is that mentioned by Irenæus, who was the disciple of Polycarp, who was the disciple of St. John the Seer, who beheld these apocalyptic visions, and therefore if any traditional interpretation deserves notice, this may lay claim to our attention. He says that it is the word

Lateinos,* “the Latin one,” that is the fourth kingdom—the letters composing this word, taken numerically, make 666. The mark, probably worn as an ornament or medal, will be a token that its wearer is a member of the great confederacy: a subject, a willing subject, of the last phase of the “Mystery Babylon.”

But the end of this minister of iniquity will be together with his master. In the last act of daring resistance against the Lord, the glory-flash shall burst over the rebel confederacy, and the King of kings and Lord of lords shall consign these twin monsters to eternal perdition. “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake burning with brimstone” (Rev. xix. 20).

* The letters taken numerically in Greek are:—

Α	=	30
Α	=	1
Τ	=	300
Ε	=	5
Ι	=	10
Ν	=	50
Ο	=	70
Σ	=	200
Total		666

III.—Thirdly, as Antichrist has had his types and representatives in every infidel and ungodly system, so has every such system always had a false prophet to abet and further its movements and usurpation. The mystery of iniquity has been at work, the evil leaven on the ferment from the beginning, and all infidel and God-opposing systems will find their superlative and climax in the resurrection of the fourth kingdom; all Antichrists in the final Antichrist, the monarch of an apostate world, and all idolatry and all perversions of the truth will culminate in the false prophet; other fulfilments have been partial and typical, these will be final and exhaustive.

This system was inaugurated by Satan when he led our first parents into unbelief and rebellion. As God was the first true prophet, so the devil was the first false prophet. All idolatry with deceiving priests and lying oracles, the worship of Baal and Astaroth, the adoration of the calves at Dan and Bethel; the Sadducism of the Jews, with their denial of vital truth, all the self-righteousness of the Pharisees who worshipped self and crucified the Lord; all the Gnosticism which infected the early Church, the delusions of Mahomet and Mormon, the idolatry and false

doctrine which have caricatured the gospel and led men from Christ to other saviours, and from the Creator to the creature; all the rationalism falsely so-called, the idolatry of intellect as opposed to the humility of faith—all these mists and fogs which have settled on the dark mountains and distilled their evil streams, shall unite in one mad cataract of iniquity, and feed and fill the final whirlpool of error and delusion, in the last idolatrous priest, the false prophet that shall work the miracles of a lie.

It will be collected from this that, as we concluded in our former address that the papacy is the present exponent of the Babylonish system, the Antichrist will be an infidel and temporal power, the full and final development of Babylonish monarchy, and now that the false prophet will be the consummation of all heretical systems, that the pope, therefore, in his official character as a spiritual despot, is specifically the forerunner of the latter—the false prophet. And what so natural or probable as that the line of succession which introduced idolatry, and has obscured and perverted the gospel, should thus close its career, and the lately pronounced dogma of the per-

sonal infallibility of the Pontiff clears the way for the universal reception of any doctrine he may propound; and the separation of the temporal crown from the spiritual opens the door for the installation of Antichrist over the old empire. What so likely as a formation of a *concordat* between a head of the secular, and a head of the spiritual sections of the system, to plot and plan a work together in harmony, that the Antichrist should elaborate his counsels: and the false prophet (believed to be infallible) should insist upon their truth and excellence, and so all be fulfilled. We will say no more than call attention to a scaffolding now rising before our eyes, which, perhaps, may be the preparation for the rearing of the Babel-town of the last days.

Finally, are we not witnessing in this our day symptoms of this coming confederacy, this final crisis? We hear much of spiritualism. It is needless to discuss whether the pretensions of the supporters of this system are based on reality, the desire or effort to hold forbidden traffic is sufficient to stamp the disciples of this school as sympathisers with Antichrist and his prophet. Again, what strange errors are rife; every kind of unbelief and every

species of superstition form league and covenant against the Gospel. It matters not how diverse they may be from one another; the feet of the bear may be grouped with the head of the lion: the only feature required to be in common to prove the family connection is hostility to Christ that bought us with His blood. If one will undermine the doctrine of His deity, another cancel the atonement, another eliminate inspiration from the Word, another set up a rival worship of idolatry, and another assert the authority of the sum total of the universal consent of the consciences of all infidels, these enemies of the truth are all at one; antagonism to Revelation is the sole qualification for the mark of the Beast. The disputes of Herod and Pilate can be arranged. Christ is rejected, that is enough; they are friends together.

Hence, in days of danger, and when prophecy paints the coming future in still darker colours, we have need to secure our own personal and individual safety. The sea is already rough, and the rising wind betokens an impending storm such as has not been yet, neither after it shall be the like. The predictions concerning the false prophet, which have engaged our thoughts to-day, should warn us against all *erroneous*

teaching. There is but one true and reliable Teacher of the Church of God, that is, the Holy Ghost. "He," said Christ, "shall guide you into the whole truth." "He shall testify of me."

We have, brethren, two tests whereby we may try every system, every doctrine, and every line of practice that may be submitted to our judgment. The first is, does this testify of Christ? does it exalt Him? does it glorify Him? extol His mercy and faithfulness and power? does it, like the Baptist, point away from man, and proclaim, "Lo! this is the Lamb of God?" Does it preach the Cross, and the power of the Blood that was shed, that can alone cleanse from sin—the resurrection, and the life that springs to us from the open grave—the High Priesthood of Jesus, our real, living, loving, personal, individual Friend and Brother, who sitteth at the right hand of God making intercession for the weakest and humblest of His disciples? and does it witness to His royalty and the coming reign of righteousness which He shall exercise upon the earth?

Secondly. Does the system or doctrine, we are testing bear the Holy Spirit's own stamp? does it make holy? does it make us see ourselves by nature sinful and lost? does

it protest against sin in every shape? does it strengthen us against temptation? does it give peace to the troubled conscience? does it stir up in us love to Jesus and devotion in God's service to witness for Him here, and long for His Kingdom hereafter? If any system or doctrine has these marks, it is the truth—it bears upon it the broad seal of God, the sure signature of Heaven.

But if not, however pretentious and plausible it be, either to the outward eye or to the inner intellect, it lacks the handwriting that is necessary for its credentials. Beware of it—trust it not, follow it not. Error creeps in by little and little. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,” By little and little all good is expelled, and all evil introduced. Beware! we *may* be on the very brink of the fulfilment of all these terrors. One touch on the springs of society and the curtain may be drawn, and all the dark tragedy laid bare to view. Let us then be watchful and cautious, jealous for the truth and for the glory of our Master. Let us rely on Him, rest on Him and look up to His Spirit for daily grace and daily guidance, so shall we be safe from the snare of Antichrist, and the wiles of the false prophet, whilst others are deceived and taken by the mystery of iniquity; and so

through mercy unspeakable, and grace undeserved, shall we be preserved from their condemnation also, and have our portion with the white-robed host that encircle the throne of God and of the Lamb.

SERMON IV.

PREACHED ON THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT,
Dec. 22, 1872.

THE SECOND ADVENT.

“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.”—
Revelation xi. 15.

IN our former discourses we have seen the gathering of the storm-clouds of lawlessness and rebellion against God in the latter day—the outbreak of the powers of darkness in the midnight of the world’s history. Our Lord foretold his disciples that in the period of the great tribulation such as had not been, and never should be, false Christs and false prophets should arise and show great signs and wonders, so that if it were possible they should deceive the

very elect, and the visions recorded in the Apocalypse picture to us in the clearest colours the features of this reign of terror. We have seen that the great Babylonish system shall reascend to power by a reunion of the ten fractional kingdoms. This reunion seems to be tacitly referred to in our text, for the true reading of this passage is *kingdom*,* not *kingdoms*—by which its unity is defined; and this confederate State being thus resuscitated and revived shall arm for the last struggle against the Lord. We have seen that this system as developed in the last phase of the fourth kingdom shall have Antichrist for its head and autocrat, who shall be accepted by the nations of the earth as a man-made Messiah, as supreme and sovereign; that the false prophet will fascinate and delude by his miracles, which will be wrought in support of the Satanic lie, both Jews and Gentiles, till all shall be in apostacy from God, and in subjection to the Dragon and his representative the Antichrist.

But lo! when the iniquity of the earth is full, when the din and discord of anarchy and blasphemy are at the highest, and the waves of wickedness are casting up their

* This is the reading of all the old manuscripts and versions.

mire and dirt, when the deluded miscreants shall be scoffing at the predictions of Scripture, and boasting of peace and safety; then, then! the seventh angel shall lift the trumpet to his lips and sound, and a blast shall peal forth that shall make earth reel and stagger. The sun shall be sabled in an eclipse of sackcloth, and the moon weep into a sea of blood, as if her heart were breaking at the sins and sufferings of her sister world; and men's hearts will quake with fear, and an awful dread of the things that are coming on the earth shall settle like a blight-cloud on their soul, and the Lord Himself will descend from heaven in the glory of His Father, and with all His Holy Angels. The false prophet shall be stricken dumb while the preaching of lies is issuing from his mouth, the Antichrist smitten before the brightness of the Christ, and the "stone cut out without hands," the stone once rejected by the builders, shall fall from heaven on the feet of the image, and all the vast architecture of iniquity shall fall together, and be scattered like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and so the kingdom and the king and the prime minister of this Babel system shall fall together, and the "ruin of that house shall be great." Rebellion shall be put down,

sin subjugated, and the "kingdom of this world" so long imposed on by the lie, and tyrannized over by the usurper, shall become the "kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and he shall be king for ever and ever!"

May the Holy Spirit so lead us to understand the Word, that we may have a place in that kingdom where Christ shall reign for ever!

I.—Hitherto the Scriptures we have considered have led us to speak of trial and suffering. "The roll has been written within and without with lamentations and mourning and woe." Evil has triumphed over the good—the Pharaohs, the Nebuchadnezzars and Cæsars have held down the truth; false teaching has corrupted the faith, and Antichrist has sought to extirpate the knowledge of God, and the gospel of His grace from the face of the earth; but now our subject leads us to speak of the destruction of the powers of evil and the triumph of the good—the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ and all His Saints. Let us view these scenes of conquest in the order in which Scripture reveals them. We have seen the Church, the flock of true believers in the Lord, suffering dire persecution under Antichrist and his false prophet. Some

have fled into the wilderness, where a refuge is to be prepared by God; but even these refugees we have beheld the great dragon pursuing, and threatening with a flood of destruction even to the last limit; and only yielding to the purpose and command of God: "Thus far shalt thou come and no further." Others are left to testify for Christ in the midst of martyrdoms and scenes of blood—the witnesses have been slain, and all that would not receive the mark of the Beast that came within the reach of the tyrant's grasp, put to the sword. It is the midnight of man's history. Darkness and the death-shadow have settled down on the earth—Antichrist and his rebel host are at the height of their revel, and one mad chorus of blasphemy, of which "away with Him" of the crucifixion-day was the key-note, resounds from hill to hill and shore to shore. But the night turns to morning. It was immediately after the deepest darkness had fallen upon the tomb of Jesus, that the morning dawn threw out its first and feeblest ray, and the Light of life, the Sun of righteousness burst forth in risen glory. And so in the hour of the thickest gloom, the flashing of that lightning that comes from the East and shines unto the West shall part the clouds,

and a still small voice shall be heard in the tents of the Virgin Church, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh. Lo! he is near! Lift up your heads, See, there is the sign of the Son of Man, coming in the glory clouds, and vested in the Shechinah. Your redemption draweth nigh." Another instant and the pealing of the jubilee trumpet, proclaiming deliverance to the captives, awakes the echoes of immensity; the voice of the Prince of the angelic host, uttering the word of command to the sleeping armies of the dead, is heard, and the storehouses of God's treasures, the mines that hide the now buried brilliants of the Redeemer's crown, shall be unsealed. Churchyards and cemeteries, where the dead have been consigned to the dust in quietude and peace, amid weeping mourners, and the solemn words of sepulture—"in sure and certain hope"—catacombs and secret vaults, where martyred saints were laid by candidates for martyrdom, shall yield their wealth; the ashes of the burnt, and the scattered relics of the mangled victims of the amphitheatre, shall be gleaned and gathered; the sea shall recoil and give up her drowned and dead, and all who have departed in the Lord shall rise vested in resurrection bodies, and pass upward to the gates of Jerusalem above.

Meanwhile the waiting, watching, suffering, martyr Church, oppressed by her enemies, galled with the scourge, or bleeding from the sword, shakes off the mortal and the miserable, and transfigured in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, springs up instinct with a new life and energy, and is borne aloft from the earth, together with the dead in Christ, to meet their descending Lord in the air, and to be with Him for ever.

For them, how great a change! How have they wept for sin, and wailed in secret penitence over their corruptions. How have they sorrowed and sighed over their thorn in the flesh. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" but they shall weep no more. Satan shall no more afflict and harass, sin no more assault, infirmities no more betray, falls and failings no more pierce their hearts as with a sword, they are perfect now before the throne, confessed and manifested members of Christ's body, and God hath wiped away their tears for ever!

"How too have they suffered! The whole world has been in arms against them. Antichrist and his armies hemmed them in on every side; death in its most terrible forms has devoured their brethren, and they have

stood by watching their agonies and waiting for their own turn. But now there shall be no more pain, Antichrist cannot reach them now. There shall be no more death, they are snatched from the Lion's mouth, and are beyond the range of his wrath. "The souls of the righteous are in the Hand of God, and there shall no evil touch them." They are home at last, after all that great tribulation. The family of the Church, the sealed of Israel, and the multitude that no man can number of every nation and people and tribe and tongue, the one Blood-bought, Spirit-sealed family of God, shall keep high Christmas-tide at the marriage supper of the Lamb in everlasting glory !

II.—The Lord has taken the Church to glory, but He returns to Israel, His ancient people, also. We have seen the Jews brought under the yoke of Antichrist. In the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their darkened understanding, they thought the flatterer was their deliverer ; they listened to his proposals, accepted his proffered aid, and received him as their King and Messiah ; they went back to their long-lost land and home under his patronage, restored and beautified their city, and rebuilt the temple, believed in the miracles of a lie

wrought by the false prophet, crowned and enthroned the Antichrist in the holy place, and, when he was absent in his wars and intrigues amongst the nations, worshipped the image of his kingdom, and thus reached the climax and summit of idolatry.

But their sin finds them out. The Deceiver has broken his covenant with them, and turns to be the direst foe to Israel, and now at the crisis-moment he is engaged in gathering the hordes of apostate Christendom on Armageddon, to make his descent like Sennacherib of old upon Jerusalem, to blot out the name of Israel from off the face of the earth, and expunge the Jew, the last witness for God, the greatest and most patent miracle of revelation, from the census-roll of humanity.

Can there be imagined a more piteous picture? Israel, the chosen race, the seed of Abraham, the friend of God. Israel, the channel of all communication between God and the world. Israel, of whom sprung the goodly fellowship of the prophets—Israel, of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came—Israel, from whose side the Church was separated to be a second and spiritual Eve, the mother of all living—Israel, so long punished for her sins, a wanderer amongst the nations—now once

more in her land, yet fallen deeper than ever into guilt and rebellion, not only in having said of the true Messiah, "We will not have this man to reign over us," but also in saying of the Antichrist, the head of the revived fourth kingdom, as their fathers did of his predecessor, "We have no king but Cæsar." Thus fallen, thus deceived, the scales begin to fall from their eyes, when the tyrant throws off his mask, and draws the sword against his victims; their error rises up before them in all its terrible proportions. Shame-stricken and abased, Israel dares not look to heaven, but like the publican smites upon her breast, "God be merciful to me the sinner." Many a touching prayer from David's Psalms, and many a piercing petition from her ancient prophets, that now seem to us hard sayings and enigmas, will then burst from her lips, as she appeals to her long-forgotten, long-forsaken God, "Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down," oh that thou mightest "still the enemy and the avenger."

The armies of the foe encircle Jerusalem again. Again the voice of the Edomite is echoed, "Down with her! Down with her, even to the ground!" the engines of war are in the very act of being

applied, the sword is drawn and the scabbard thrown away, the word of command is just issuing from the lips of the arch-tyrant, to deal the final stroke, when lo! the lightning flash, the van-guard of the heavenly army shall burst over the city of the great King, and lo! one is seated on the glory-cloud, like unto the Son of Man. A sword flashes from His lips, and the breath of His mouth, like flakes of falling flame, smites down the foe; the Beast and the false prophet are taken and bound hand and foot, and embalmed in graveclothes of fire, are hurled alive into the molten waves of the lake of torment, and the remnant of the deluded hosts are slain with the sword of Him who "treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

The enemy is no more; his power is quenched for ever. But there stands before the astonished nation the form of their Deliverer, girt with the glory of the rainbow after the deluge of the desolating storm. They gaze at Him, but scarcely dare they, can they gaze. It is He; it must be Jesus the Nazarene; see! the hands are pierced, the feet, the side! It is the long-rejected, the reviled, the crucified! Joseph stands before His brethren, and they

are troubled at His presence. But hark the silence—the anxious silence is broken ! and words of pardon, peace, and love flow from the lips of Him who ever spoke words of wondrous tenderness and love. “Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring it to pass, as at this day, to save much people alive.”

Overwhelmed with the deepest sorrow and penitence, convinced and converted by the Holy Spirit,—the Spirit of grace and supplications,—“they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son and shall be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn ” (Zech. xii. 10). And they shall smite upon their breasts and fall low before His feet, and cry “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord ” (Matt. xxiii. 39).

Then shall all the glorious predictions with which the Spirit of God has painted the future, be fulfilled. Then shall Jesus be acknowledged the King of the Jews, then shall the angel’s word be found literally true: “He shall be great,—and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.”

(Luke i. 32, 33.) And the 72nd Psalm shall be exhausted in One more than Solomon, "In His days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (verse 7). Then shall Isaiah ix. 6, be understood, "His name shall be called. Wonder, Counsellor, Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace." And the words of Jeremiah, ch. xxiii. 6, shall be accomplished, "In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel dwell safely and this is His name, whereby He shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness." And the nations of the world that smarted under Antichrist, and have been oppressed by the usurped rule of the Babylonish powers ever since the time of Nebuchadnezzar, shall be given to the Messiah for His inheritance, "The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall be king for ever and ever."

III.—The message of joy is not all told. The Church is above in glory, dwelling in the heavenly Jerusalem, the city that descends from Heaven, whose Builder and Maker is God. See! Its gates are of pearl, and its streets of gold, its walls salvation and its portals praise. Here are the mansions provided and prepared by the Lord

Jesus for the tenants of the heavenly inheritance, the saved out of the dispensations gone before ; here with angels and powers of light, and all the company of heaven shall they circle and cluster round the throne, and make eternity echo with the anthem, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent is King."

The Jews are restored and re-established in their land, according to the ancient promise and covenant, forming the centre of a regenerated world. None of the good things predicted shall be found to fail, but the servants in the palace of the true Solomon shall with love and adoration take up the words of the Queen of Sheba, "the half was not told us."

But yet there are lying out in the dark and distant corners of the earth, heathens who have never heard of Christ's fame or seen His glory. To these, the ignorant, the benighted, and idolatrous, light is sprung up. The Covenant hath given the utmost ends of the earth to Christ for His inheritance, and now His ancient people rise to their proper calling, and the eternal purpose of God, as the builders of the Church and witnesses of Himself. Converted like Paul in the midst of their worst

sins, and in the like manner by the appearance of the Lord in glory, filled with the same spirit of grace, burning with earnestness and zeal, much forgiven, much loving, and sent forth by the Holy Ghost, shall they hasten to the ends of the earth as missionaries of their Master's Gospel, and heralds of millennial joys.

Throughout the vast and distant realms of heathendom, the land of darkness and death, they tell the wonders of the Crucifixion, and preach the sacrifice of atoning love and power, the virtue, the healing, saving virtue, of the Blood that was shed on Calvary. They point to the glittering glory that rests upon the earth like a new-born sun—as proof of their mission from Jesus the King. To preach is to convert—to listen is to be saved, for the fountains of love are broken up, and the windows from on high are opened, and the earth is deluged with living waters, and the Spirit is poured out without measure! The nations are born in a day, and “ten men out of all languages lay hold upon the skirt of him that is a Jew, and say “We will go with you, for God is with you of a truth” (Zech. viii. 23). Then shall the Mountain of the house of the Lord be established on the top of the

mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it (Is. ii. 2). Jerusalem shall be the metropolis of the regenerated world. And this poor fallen earth, that has so long groaned under the weight of woe, and been bathed with the bitter tears of her sinful children, shall be restored as if man had never fallen; and under the baptism of the Spirit, its fields shall be converted again into a paradise, and "its deserts bud and blossom as a rose," and peace, peace, everlasting peace, shall fold all creation in its soft embrace, for the Prince of Peace is the Universal King—and "the kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall be King for ever and ever."

This is the hope of the Church; "here the patience and the faith of the saints." Are we the Lord's? Have we washed in His atoning Blood? This is the one prime and all-important question. Are we one with Him? Have we taken our sins and our sorrows to Him? Is He our great Confessor to whom we unburden and unbosom all our griefs, our shortcomings, and our sins? Is He our great High Priest and Advocate; and have we consigned our cause to Him? Are we under the teach-

ing and guidance of the Holy Ghost, each day fighting against sin, opposing the teaching of Antichrist, and resisting all that seems to savour of the false prophet; and thus are we being braced and toned up for the coming conflict; and fitted for the attainment and the enjoyment of the victory?

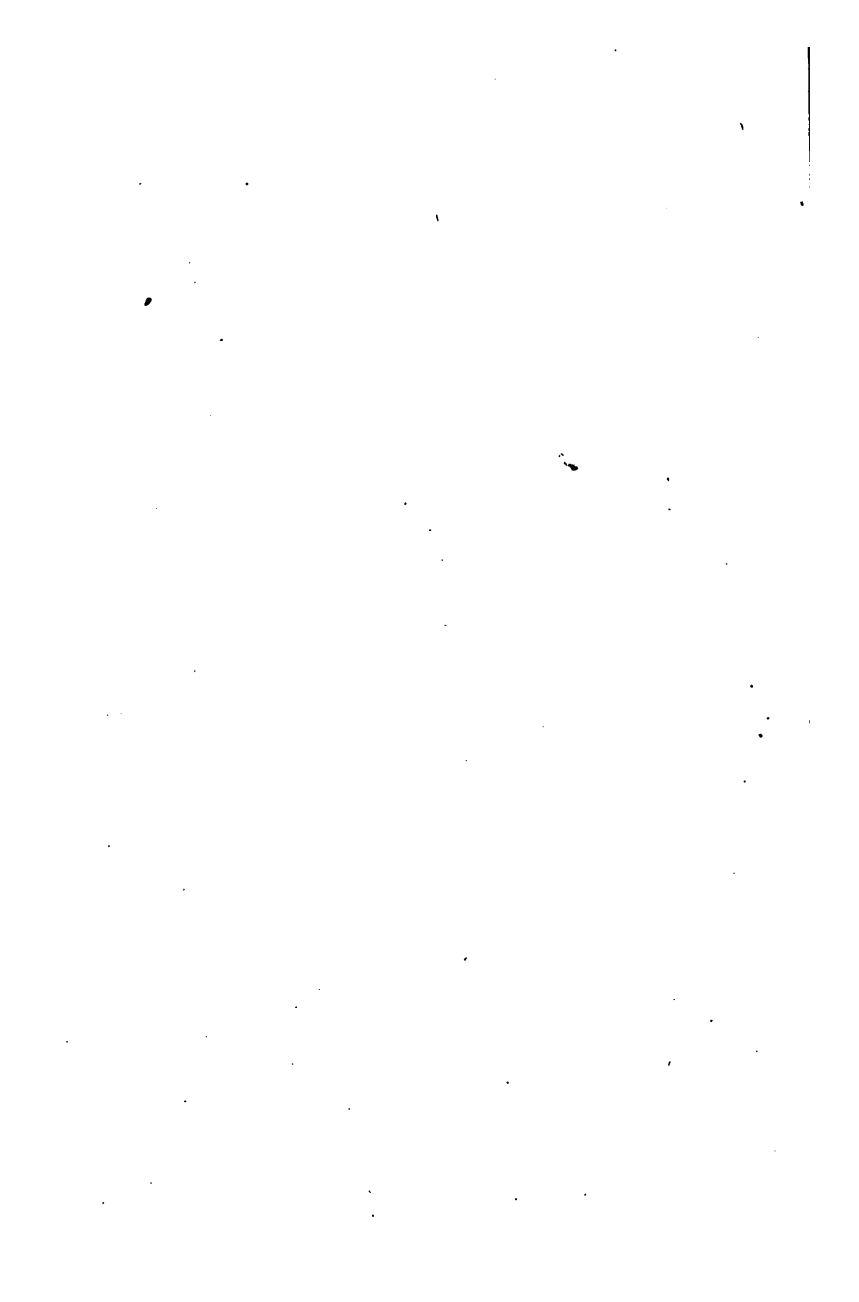
If not, *all* the work has to be done. Advent with all its terrible prelude is at the door. It is no time for worldly, carnal joy to the slaves of sin or the servants of the world. O my hearers! we stand upon the threshold of the opening door, and plead—Oh! turn you, ere the seal of darkness—eternal darkness shall settle on you—ere you are carried away with the flood that shall engulf all the ungodly and the reprobate! ere you be ensnared in the Antichristian rebellion; for only the Lord's people will recognise the man of sin—turn, ere the judgment be set, and the books opened; ere the vials of wrath be emptied; ere the pit close her mouth; the chain be riveted, and the fire kindled. Turn to the loving Lord, Who died for you—for YOU! and sends His Spirit to plead with you, to convince you, to convert you even in this the eleventh hour—the Saturday night of our history—and ye shall be saved!

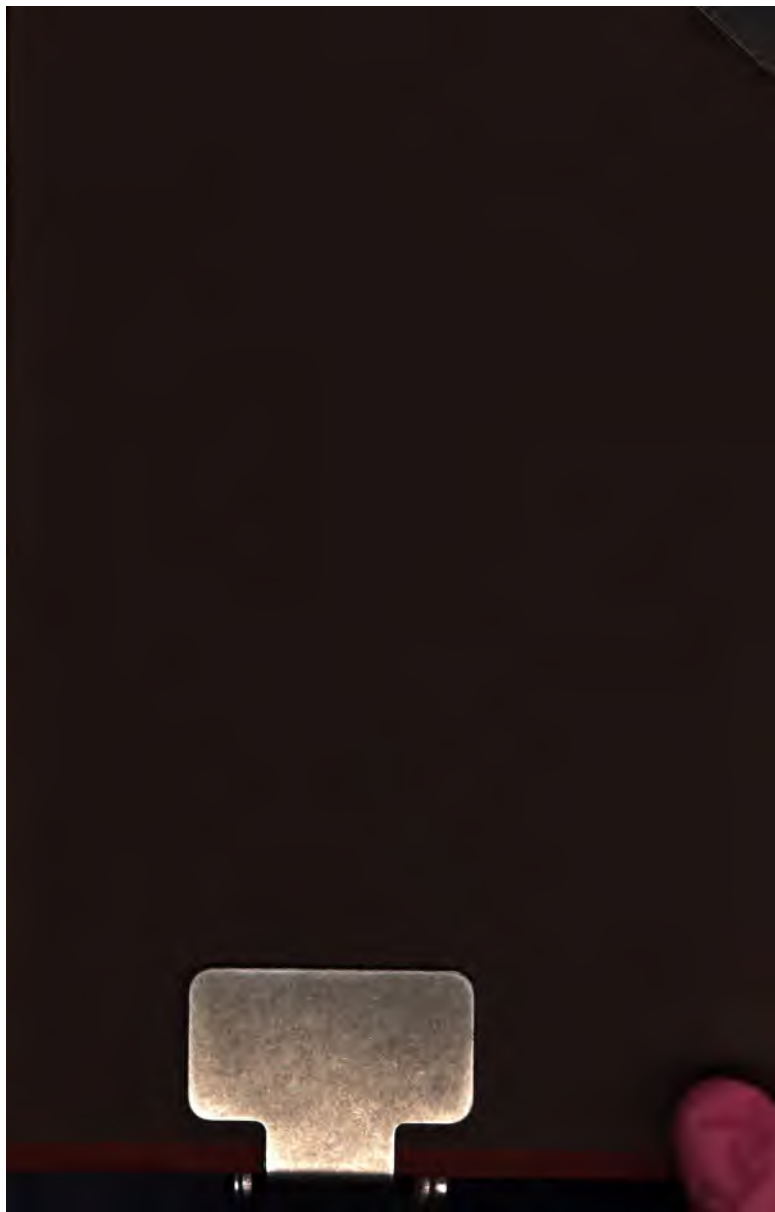
We learn another lesson from our subject. Let us beware of all alliance with Rome. We need not enter into any long or laboured discussion concerning the doctrines which distinguish that communion from our own. We are bound to confine ourselves to the argument founded on the prophetic word. The stone, whose fall is to pulverise the kingdoms of this world, has not yet fallen, else they would not be in existence, the theocracy would be re-established, truth would have triumphed, and the kingdom of Christ would hold the sway. That stone, then, has yet to fall, but where will that world-crushing rock descend? We are told on the *feet* of the mystical image—on the fourth kingdom—on Rome. It is there, then, that the great earthquake will burst, there the hurricane sweep, there the judgment lay desolate. Well, whispers the voice of warning, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” (Rev. xviii. 4).

But if, brethren, the glory that is to be revealed is our hope, I would say to each of you, O child of God, set your affections there; let the prospect of your inheritance be a medicine for your every trial. Prophecy is,

of all subjects, most cheering—most elevating to the drooping and depressed. It draws aside the veil of night, and translates into the realms of the coming day. Are you in affliction? It whispers, your sorrow shall cease. God shall wipe away your tears. Are you persecuted for the truth's sake? The Lord shall take away your rebuke. Are you tempted? do the fiery darts fall thick and hot upon your soul? Satan shall soon be chained. Or do you grieve over friends and loved ones who, but the other day, worshipped with us, and on whose grave the grass is not yet grown? Prophecy tells us there is a resurrection coming, and that all that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him. Is the night of Antichrist weaving its winding-sheet around us? Then, brethren, let our hope, our resurrection-hope, grow stronger, to nerve us against his threats that terrify, and his lying miracles that deceive. If God be for us, who can be against us? the night is but short—the lamps of God are overhead—and soon the Sun of righteousness will dawn upon us. Error shall be trodden down, persecutions cease, sin, disaster, and death be vanquished—the palm of victory shall be awarded, and the throne of triumph be revealed. The

heavens are ripe for bursting, the Lord Jesus yearns to flood us with His blessing. Close we then with the Advent-prayer,—
O Lord, come quickly, Amen.—“Even so come, Lord Jesus!”





18



18